

BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL



A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Department of Workforce Investment
Education Cabinet

<http://www.ovr.ky.gov>

INTRODUCTION

Under the *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA 1997) public schools are mandated to provide transition services to all students with disabilities. These services are designed to assist students to prepare for activities beyond high school such as post secondary training, employment and independent living. Schools are ultimately responsible for the provision of transition services, however outside agencies, such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), may be identified through the Individual Education Program (IEP) to assist in the provision of these services. OVR is a state agency that assists eligible individuals to identify, plan for, and achieve their vocational goals.

This booklet is designed to help students and their parents understand transition, what role OVR plays in the transition process and how to access services available through the Office. In Kentucky, OVR is committed to partnering with Local Education Authorities (LEA) to ensure that the vocational needs of eligible students with disabilities are identified as early as possible, planned for appropriately and provided accordingly. This collaborative effort is designed to ensure a seamless transition from school to the adult world.

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WHAT ARE TRANSITION SERVICES?

In both IDEA (1997) and The Rehabilitation Act as Amended (1998) transition services are defined as:

*“...a coordinated set of **activities** for a student, designed within an **outcome-oriented process**, which promotes movement from school to **post-school activities**.”*

Let's explain that in more detail...

Since the passage of IDEA in 1990, schools have been held more accountable for providing educational services that will ensure success beyond high school. Student activities are being developed and coordinated in such a way that they support and foster appropriate outcomes for students. The **activities** that the law is referring to may include any of the following:

- Instruction
- Community experience
- Development of employment
- Post-school adult living objectives
- Daily living skills, or
- Functional vocational evaluation

Participation in these activities is individualized and based on the student's needs, taking into account his/her preferences and interests.

For the OVR eligible student, **outcome** refers to competitive **employment** in an integrated setting. All services provided by the Office are based on a student's specific vocational goal and determined by what is needed in order to reach that goal. Services are coordinated and designed to assist the student to move towards any of the following **post-secondary activities**:

- Post secondary education
- Vocational training
- Integrated and/or supported employment
- Continuing and adult education
- Adult services
- Independent living, or
- Community participation

WHO'S INVOLVED IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS?

Successful transition from school to adult life for the student with a disability can be complex and requires a team effort. Although the LEA bears the primary responsibility for the coordination and provision of transition services, other community agencies as well as family and friends need to be a part of the process.

WHAT ROLE DO FAMILY AND FRIENDS PLAY IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS?

The provision of transition services is based on “student needs, taking into account the student preferences and interests.” Family and friends not only play a critical role in identifying the student’s needs, preferences and interests, but also can help others to understand the best ways to support their child as they transition to adult life.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR AGENCIES OTHER THAN EDUCATION TO BE INVOLVED IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS?

While a student is in school they are entitled to many services as required by IDEA. When they graduate, entitlement to these services ends and alternate means of obtaining appropriate and needed services must be secured through adult service providers. Issues around who will provide the services and eligibility requirements for services should be explored early on so that there isn't a lapse in needed services when the student exits school.

WHAT IS OVR'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN PROVIDING TRANSITION SERVICES?

The role of OVR while a student is in high school is primarily to assist in planning for the student's years after high school, in particular planning for those activities related to employment. Consultation with schools should enable school personnel and students with disabilities to understand and prepare for OVR services and employment. The eligible student will receive a comprehensive assessment to determine vocational needs, interests, capacities, and abilities as well as guidance and counseling to assist in determining a specific vocational goal.

Once the eligible student exits high school, OVR becomes responsible for providing or coordinating the provision of those services necessary for the student to reach his/her vocational goal. The focus of services at this time is on acquiring skills that are necessary to obtain and maintain employment.

DOES OVR ONLY PROVIDE TRANSITION SERVICES TO STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION?

No, we are not limited to serving only students in special education. However, in order for a student to be eligible for services from OVR, he/she must meet the following criteria as required by The Rehabilitation Act as Amended (1998):

- ✓ They must have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment;
- ✓ They must be able to benefit from OVR services; and
- ✓ They must require OVR services to prepare for, obtain or maintain employment.

Those individuals receiving Social Security Benefits are presumed eligible for services provided that they want to work.

Additionally, once a consumer is determined eligible for OVR services they must also meet the current “order of selection” in order to receive a full range of services. Due to limited funds, the Office has had to prioritize who will be able to be served. At this time those individuals determined to have the most significant disabilities (MSD) will be served first, and individuals determined to have significant disabilities (SD) will be served second. Individuals who meet the criteria for eligibility, but are determined to have less significant disabilities will be provided with information and referral services to other agencies to assist them in meeting their employment needs.

WHAT IS THE REFERRAL PROCESS TO OVR FOR SERVICES?

Referrals can be made on behalf of any student whose disability might prevent them from training for, getting, or keeping a job. School personnel, the student, family, friends, or other community resource can make a referral. Typically, referrals are made two years prior to the student exiting high school. However, they can be made sooner, if necessary.

The LEA is responsible for identifying students with disabilities who may be appropriate for services from OVR. Students can be in either special education or regular education programs. The Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) will refer students receiving special education services under an IEP. Students with disabilities who may be eligible for services, but who are not being served by special education, will be referred by the guidance counselor or appropriate person designated by the LEA.

Ideally, a referral to OVR for services should be made at the same time as referrals to other appropriate local community agencies (such as boards of mental retardation and developmental disabilities, mental health, human services and/or children services; the city/county health department; the KY Office of Employment and Training; and the Social Security Administration). This enables all the agencies to work together during the transition process and helps to ensure that services are coordinated.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE REFERRAL PACKET TO OVR?

Eligibility for OVR services will be determined after a careful review of the student's current functioning and needs. To assist in this process, a referral to OVR should include the following information, if available:

- The school psychological evaluation
- Independent evaluations such as a medical, or specialty evaluations
- A copy of the IEP or 504 Plan
- School transcripts
- Any other assessments or plans

WHAT CAN STUDENTS AND PARENTS EXPECT DURING TRANSITION PLANNING?

Students and parents should be active participants in transition planning since transition services are based on the interests and preferences of the student. For students who are 16 years of age or older, transition planning is a required component of the IEP and is one of the purposes for the annual IEP meeting.

Participants in transition planning should include:

- The student and his/her representative, if necessary (If the student does not attend, the LEA shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.);
- A representative of any agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. (If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not attend, the LEA shall take steps to obtain the participation of the other agency in the planning of any transition services.)

When appropriate and possible, the OVR counselor will participate in the LEA's planning meeting for transition services. By participating in these meetings, OVR can assist the eligible student to identify vocational goals and

plan for his/her needs after high school long before he/she exits the school system.

The OVR counselor, along with the student and/or his/her representative will work with the LEA to determine vocational goals and plan for any services required to attain those goals. The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), a OVR planning document, must be coordinated with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or other education plans in terms of goals, objectives and services.

The IPE must reflect the OVR services needed to reach the student's specific vocational goal and must be in place prior to the student exiting school.

WHAT TYPES OF SERVICES MIGHT OVR PROVIDE TO ELIGIBLE STUDENTS?

Prior to graduation, the eligible student can expect to receive a comprehensive assessment to determine vocational interests, capacities, and abilities, as well as guidance and counseling to determine an appropriate vocational goal and the services necessary to attain that goal.

All services that are planned for and provided are individualized, determined jointly by the counselor and the student, and directly related to a specific vocational goal.

After graduation, services vary depending upon the student's individual goals and needs, however the focus remains on acquiring skills to get a job, job development, job placement, and follow-up.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WHO PLAN TO TRANSITION DIRECTLY TO EMPLOYMENT?

The Community Based Work Transition Program (CBWTP) is a jointly funded program between OVR and the KY Department of Education that is available through a number of school districts in the state. The goal of the CBWTP is for each student to obtain a job in the most integrated setting prior to graduation, with necessary supports in place to maintain employment. Although this program might be of benefit to every student, it is reserved for only those students with significant disabilities who **require** the services of a job trainer in order to make a successful transition from school to the world of work. **Students who are able and plan to attend any type of post-secondary training program or the military would not be appropriate for the CBWTP.**

Once eligibility for OVR services is determined, the rehabilitation counselor will determine if the CBWTP is the most appropriate program for the student. Typically, the student will begin the program during his/her junior year (or equivalent), with the first step being a community-based vocational evaluation. Based on the information gathered during the evaluation, an appropriate vocational goal will be determined as well as those services necessary for the student to achieve his/her goal. More information about this program can be found at www.ihdi.uky.edu/cbwtp .

WHAT IF MY CHILD NEEDS SUPPORT BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

Supported Employment may be an option for your child. This particular program provides long-term support for persons with the most significant disabilities who want to work in the community. Support services begin when an eligible individual first enrolls in a Supported Employment program and continues after a OVR case is closed. Assistance is provided in every aspect of a person's employment, such as person-centered planning, job development,

job placement, workplace accommodations, and follow-up services for the duration of employment. The support can be intensive depending on the particular individual and job site needs, but the goal is to lead the individual to employment independence. For further information on Supported Employment services in your area, contact your OVR Counselor. Additional information about Supported Employment can be found at www.ihdi.uky.edu/kyseweb or <http://www.ovr.ky.gov>.

WHAT ELSE DO STUDENTS AND PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OVR AND THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE?

Many services are provided regardless of your financial situation. You and your counselor will discuss the income and resources of your household. In some cases, you may be asked to participate in the cost of your program. Federal law requires that the consumer use any other benefits for which he/she is eligible to cover the cost of some services. These benefits may include training grants, Medicare, Medicaid, Worker's Compensation, and insurance. If you refuse to apply for and use other benefits for which you are eligible, the Office cannot pay for the planned service.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?

For additional information or to make a referral, please contact the OVR office nearest to your home. On the back cover of this booklet is a list of district offices and phone numbers for your convenience.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DISTRICT OFFICES

All Offices V/TTY

CENTRAL OFFICE

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Florence 859-371-9450
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Suite 203
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40507 888-990-9098 TTY

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